



# A STUDY ON ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN THE DISTRICT OF KOTTAYAM

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to determine whether the decisions made by School Administrators are based on their awareness on the ethical theories like Virtue ethics and Deontology or are they based on the 'Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers' prepared by National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the 'Ethical Framework' drafted by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The present study adopted a Survey for data collection procedure. A Questionnaire is used to collect data for the study on ethical decision-making of School administrators. Data were collected from practicing School administrators in public and private schools. The data collected were analyzed through ethical theories like Virtue ethics and Deontology and on the basis of codes of ethics by NCTE and ethical framework by NCERT. Results indicate that School administrators need more training in ethical-decision making and in resolving ethical dilemmas. The study also shows that there is a need of including ethics as a core subject in teacher education programmes.

**KEY WORDS:** Ethics, Ethical decision-making, School administrator, Ethical dilemma, Ethical framework.

## INTRODUCTION:

Ethics is a concept about moral rightness and wrongness of actions. School Administrators' major responsibility is to behave ethically while making decisions. Decision-making is the most central aspect of educational administration. It is the process through which administrators work to accomplish their tasks. It means making a choice of one from among two or more alternatives to achieve an objective. The power of an administrator in any educational organization is a function of control over decision-making process. To make ethical decisions School administrators must have a thorough knowledge of various ethical philosophies and be familiar with 'Codes of Professional Ethics' and 'Ethical Frameworks' for School leaders.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

School administrators face several conflicts and dilemmas in their daily work. There are no laws or polices to guide them. School administrators may rely on personal values and morals when dealing with ethical dilemmas. The literature review suggests that educational preparation programmes do not adequately prepare School administrators for their jobs' (Fossey & Shoho 2006). In India there was not much study on the ethical decision-making of teachers and School administrators and their dealings with dilemmas in their daily work environment. The significance of the study was threefold; in its contribution to scholarly literature, to the need for the study of ethics and to resolution of ethical dilemmas. The study expanded the existing knowledge of School administrators' ethical decision-making. It also contributed to the existing knowledge of ethical decision-making in School administration.

## STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:

This study is an investigative report on School administrator's decision making process based on the tenets of the NCTE's 'Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers' and NCERT's 'Education for Values in Schools'. The study was conducted on the basis of ethical theories like Virtue Ethics and Deontology.

Decision-making is an important aspect of school. In a school, the Principal is the main decision maker. Therefore decision directly affects school climate positively or negatively. This situation necessitates the need of a study on the decision-making of School administrators. Hence the problem is entitled as 'Study on Ethical Decision-Making of School Administrators in the District of Kottayam'.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS:

**Ethics:** 'Ethics is the study of what constitutes a moral life. Ethics is defined as the well-based standards of right and wrong of an individual's core beliefs and values'.

**Ethical dilemma:** 'An ethical dilemma is a situation that necessitates a choice among competing set of principles, values, beliefs and perspectives. Ethical dilemmas are not always about right versus wrong, but are usually about right versus right options. It is not always easy to decide which of the two rights will yield the best decision'.

**Ethical framework:** 'An ethical framework is defined as a basic assumption about beliefs, values and principles used to guide choices'.

**Ethical decision-making:** 'It refers to the process of evaluating and choosing among alternatives in a manner consistent with ethical principles. In making ethical decisions, it is necessary to perceive and eliminate unethical options and select the best ethical alternative'.

**School Administrator:** The School Administrator is the administrative and instructional leader of the students, teachers and staff in a public or private upper primary, secondary or senior secondary School.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To know whether the decisions made by School administrators are ethical or not.
- To know whether School administrators are aware of the 'Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers' drafted by NCTE.
- To know whether School administrators are aware of the 'Education for Values in Schools-A Framework' prepared by NCERT.
- To know whether School administrators are aware of various ethical theories such as virtue ethics and deontology (duty-based ethics).

## METHODOLOGY:

The present study adopted a Survey method for the Data collection procedure. Questionnaires are the most commonly used tool in Survey research. So in this study the researcher used a questionnaire in order to collect data for the study on Ethical Decision-making of School administrators.

## Population of the study:

The population of the study was comprised of the School administrators of elementary, secondary and higher secondary schools in the district of Kottayam in Kerala State.

## Sample selected for the study:

The School administrators from 30 different schools in the district of Kottayam were selected as the sample of the study. The samples were selected from among the government, aided and private schools in Kottayam.

## Tool used in the study:

To collect data from the subjects the investigator constructed a questionnaire on Ethical decision-making. The questionnaire was validated by the experts.

## Administration of the Tool:

The investigator prepared the tool by considering valuable suggestions of the experts and the supervising teacher. The suggestions, corrections and opinion of experts and supervisor were implemented in the final draft. The items were made clear and specific and certain vague items were deleted.

**Procedure adopted:**

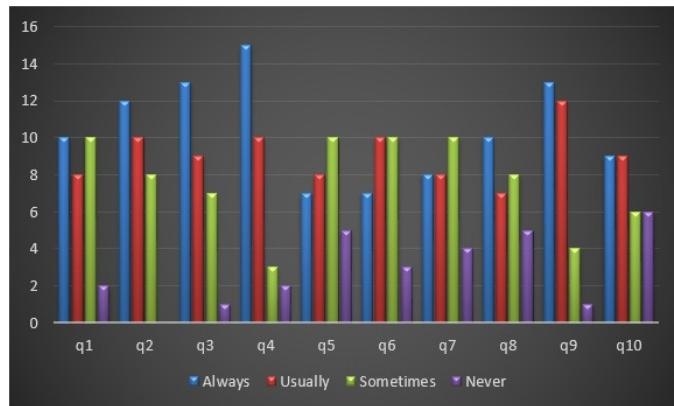
The investigator approached School administrators and explained clearly the purpose and nature of the study. School administrators co-operated sincerely for conducting the Survey.

**ANALYSIS OF DATA:**

The present study which is entitled as 'A Study on Ethical Decision Making of School Administrators in the district of Kottayam' was conducted for 30 School administrators in government, aided and private schools in the Kottayam District in Kerala. The School administrators were directed to respond to the 10 questions in the 'Ethical Decision-Making Questionnaire'. Each question has 4 options to respond; Always, Usually, Sometimes and Never which carried scores 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Summary of the responses to the survey are tabulated as follows:

**Table 1 : Survey Response Summary**

Response	Question No.									
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Always	10	12	13	15	7	7	8	10	13	9
Usually	8	10	9	10	8	10	8	7	12	9
Sometimes	10	8	7	3	10	10	10	8	4	6
Never	2	0	1	2	5	3	4	5	1	6

**Fig. 1: Graphical representation of Responses**

The table shows that more than 60 % of the School administrators are aware of the importance of ethics in decision-making. But this awareness is not due to their knowledge in ethical theories as they had not get any opportunity to study ethics as a core subject either in their bachelors or masters degree in Education. Moreover the in-service courses provided by the Department of Education are also not much concerned about the need of ethics in teaching profession. So the awareness is purely based on their inherent moral values and the experience they gained from their profession.

Although NCTE & NCERT stressed the need of ethics in decision-making, School administrators are not much aware of the Code of Professional Ethics drafted by NCTE and the Ethical Framework prepared by NCERT that are the guide posts in making ethical decisions. In India studies related to ethical decision making is still an untapped area. Most of the studies are either from United States or from European countries. Review of Related Literature showed that School Administrators need more training in ethical decision making and in resolving ethical dilemmas. Also the literature review revealed the need of including ethics as a core subject in teacher training programmes.

A systematic study of various ethical philosophies and a thorough knowledge in the 'Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers' drafted by NCTE and in the 'Ethical Framework' prepared by NCERT is indispensable for School administrators to make ethical decisions. This helps School administrators to make their decisions more reliable, acceptable and scientific.

**MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:**

- The ethical decisions of School administrators are based on his or her personal ethics and values.
- School administrators are not much aware of the 'Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers' prepared by NCTE.
- School administrators are not much aware of the Ethical Framework drafted by NCERT.
- School administrators need more training in ethical decision making and in resolving ethical dilemmas.

- School administrators are not much aware of the ethical theories like virtue ethics and deontology.
- There is a need of including Ethics as a core subject in teacher education programmes.

**CONCLUSION BASED ON FINDINGS:**

The present study showed that the decisions made by more than half of the School administrators are ethically right. They made these ethical decisions purely on the basis of their professional experience and also on the basis of their personal moral values. But in certain critical situations these experiences and personal moral values are not enough to make an ethical decision. In such a situation the School administrator will be in a state of ethical dilemma. To come to an ethical decision a systematic study of ethical theories is necessary. A thorough understanding of the 'Code of Ethics' and the 'Ethical Framework' is also equally important to make an ethical decision in critical situations. At present these are just guide lines for School administrators. The central and state governments in India haven't implemented it in the schools as mandatory criteria in making ethical decisions. Review of literature revealed that the same situation is prevailing in the United States and in the Western countries. Ethics is not taught as a core subject in any teacher training courses in India. So teachers are not getting any opportunity to study ethics systematically and authentically. School administrators began their career as teachers and so, if they do not get an opportunity to learn ethics in their previous positions, they may not be able to apply the theories of ethics in decision-making later in their school administration.

In short the present study indicated that even though a glimpse of ethical theories like virtue ethics and duty-based ethics can be seen in the decisions made by School administrators, it is not purely based on knowledge of such philosophical theories but as a result of the professional experience of administrators and their personal ethical values. The study also revealed that School administrators are not much aware of the 'Code of Professional Ethics for School Teachers' drafted by NCTE and the 'Ethical Framework' prepared by NCERT. This shows that there is urgency in including Ethics in teacher training curriculum and the central and state governments must implement the 'Code of Ethics' and the 'Ethical Framework' in all schools in India. This helps teachers and School administrators to make more valid and authentic ethical decisions. As doctors and lawyers need a license to practice their profession, the government must issue a license for teachers as well and make it mandatory that for this license ship the teacher must study Ethics as a core subject in their training courses and he/she must have a thorough knowledge in the 'Code of Ethics' and the 'Ethical Framework' drafted by NCTE and NCERT respectively.

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